"Larry Brown: Hoop Dreams" (PAGES 6–7)

LESSON PLAN BY AMY HELLER

After reading the article on Coach Larry Brown of the Detroit Pistons, students will explore the concept of hope by examining inspirational stories and role models, and creating comic strips of the stories. In their discussions, students will consider how to be hopeful in the face of adversity.

CONCEPTS AND OBJECTIVES

- Students will use Biblical and historical stories in which the Jewish people were at a disadvantage to examine the idea of hope and inspiration.
- Students will discuss different role models in these stories and their own lives.

KEY QUOTES AND QUESTIONS

"You've got to be positive with players....The more you prepare and the harder you work, the more hope you have."

How might Larry Brown push his players to be prepared and play harder?

Has anyone pushed you to work harder? What were the results?

"If the players see that I don't give up and that I'll keep playing until the end, they'll do the same."

Why is it important for the coach not to give up till the very end?

What effect does this have on players?

"...if you don't give up, that attitude will help you in the long run."

How is this advice played out on a basketball court or sports field? How can it play out in other areas of one's life?

MOTIVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

1. After reading the Larry Brown article, ask students to work in small groups of three or four to brainstorm books, movies, or sports memories in which a group of underdogs perseveres through personal and group struggles and emerges victorious. [Examples: *The Mighty Ducks*, *Hoosiers*]

NOTE

If you have the luxury of time, you may want to devote a class session to watching one of these films.

Have each group present its titles and record the list on the board. Students should return to their groups and brainstorm stories from Biblical or historical times where the Jews were at a disadvantage but ultimately emerged victorious [examples: Joshua at Jericho, the Maccabees, Israel's War of Independence]. Collect the groups' responses and record the events in a separate column on the board.

2. Compare the two lists using the following questions, recording answers on the board:

Who were the role models in these stories?

What were their inspirational words for creating hope in the group?

How is engendering hope in a group similar to cultivating hope in an individual? How is it different?

What are the different qualities of these role models? How are they similar or different from Larry Brown's philosophy?

How did the group succeed?

How might you have handled the situation if you had been the group's leader?

Have you had a similar experience where hope helped you persevere?

3. Study and discuss the Jewish texts and questions below.

4. Have the students choose one of the Jewish stories discussed earlier. In pairs or individually, have students create a comic book or strip that tells the story. (If students choose a Biblical story, the comic can tell the actual story or a modern-day representation; for example, the Maccabees playing a basketball game against the reigning champions, the Syrian Greeks.) Encourage the students to include an inspirational message in one of the panels of the comic strip.

Alternatively, following a discussion with the students about their own experiences of being at a disadvantage, have them create a comic book that tells their own stories. Be sure to have them focus on the hopes they had and how they were or were not victorious.

JEWISH TEXTS

Proverbs 13:12

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

What does the first half of this text mean?

How can hope that is not yet realized make the heart sick?

Why do you think that the source uses the word "deferred"? How does that seemingly negative word still convey a sense of hopefulness?

Why is a desire or hope that has been fulfilled considered a "tree of life"? What do you think that comparison means?

How does this relate to Larry Brown's philosophy on hope?

Psalms 31:25

Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in God.

How did the leaders in the historical events we listed convey this same message?

How can this be a source of hope for both groups, communities, or teams, and individuals?

Hatikvah

As long as deep in the heart, the soul of a Jew yearns, and towards the East, an eye looks to Zion, our hope is not yet lost, the hope of two thousand years, to be a free people in our land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem.

Why do you think the national anthem of Israel focuses so much on hope? What has been the hope of the past "two thousand years"?

For more questions on this source, see pages 11–12 of this guide.

FOLLOW-UP AND ENRICHMENT

1. Have students write about their own experiences when they felt that the odds were against them. They can also write about an experience where they pushed harder than they usually do and persevered despite the odds against them. As an alternative, have students write a story about a role model who inspired them to work harder.

2. Post the following quotations about hope from secular sources on index cards around the classroom. (Printable versions of these quotations are available online at www.babaganewz.com/teachers.) Working in groups, students should circulate around the room in a round robin fashion, stop at a different quotation every time you signal, and discuss its message. In particular, they should comment upon how the text compares to the Jewish texts studied in this lesson. Continue signaling until groups have visited and discussed each quotation.

Adversity causes some men to break; others to break records.
—William A. Ward

It is a rough road that leads to the heights of greatness.
—Seneca

I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it.
—Thomas Jefferson

It ain't over 'til it's over.
—Yogi Berra

Fall seven times, stand up eight.
—Japanese Proverb

Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.
—Joshua J. Marine

You get the best out of others when you give the best of yourself.
—Harry Firestone

A real leader faces the music, even when he doesn't like the tune.
—Anonymous

The difference between a boss and a leader: A boss says, 'Go!'—a leader says, 'Let's go!'
—E. M. Kelly

I'll stand my ground and I won't back down
Well I know what's right, I got just one life
In a world that keeps on pushing me around
Well I'll stand my ground and I won't back down
—Tom Petty

RELATED WEB SITES/ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Professional resources and tips for creating comic strips
www.members.shaw.ca/creatingcomics/index.htm

VOCABULARY FOR YOUR STUDENTS

מַנְהִיג / מַנְהִיגָה	leader (m./f.)
הַשְׁרָאָה	inspiration